



The WILDCOMS newsletter reports newsworthy articles and recent publications from the schemes involved in the WILDCOMS network.

## Scheme news

**WILDCOMS are pleased to welcome a new scheme - the Scottish Raptor Health Study - to the network.**

The Scottish Raptor Health Study is a surveillance scheme assessing the health of Scottish raptors and using them as indicators of ecosystem health. The project performs post mortem examinations on all Scottish raptor birds submitted to look at factors contributing to their death and examines live raptor chicks for health assessment. Samples originating from these two sources undergo bacteriology, parasitology, virology and toxicology testing.



**WIIS-Scotland.** The results from WIIS-Scotland are published quarterly. The results for incidents from April to June 2016 have been added to the SASA website and can be viewed here.

The **Disease Risk Analysis and Health Surveillance Programme (DRAHS)** recently published the first account of a disease risk analysis for a conservation translocation to include post-release disease surveillance. The pool frog (*Pelophylax lessonae*) was reintroduced to England from Sweden between 2005 and 2008. DRAHS carried out a disease risk analysis before the project commenced, and Ranavirus and *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* were considered high-risk disease threats for pool frogs at the destination site. Mitigation measures to reduce the disease risks were implemented once the first pool frogs were transported and post-release health surveillance through clinical and pathological examinations.



**Cardiff University Otter Project: Interesting occurrences from the Post Mortem Lab.**

Over the past few months the Cardiff University Otter Project (CUOP) has received a number of interesting otters. Since August three pregnant females have been post mortemed after road traffic accidents, two of which had near full term twins. While most of the otters the project receives have died on roads, each year we do get a few cases of drowning in fish traps. One such trap examined in November (illegally set) claimed the lives of a female and two young males, presumably a mother and cubs. This highlights how critical it is that traps such as these are fitted with guards to prevent accidental killing of otters and water voles.



For information on licensing see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/permission-to-trap-crayfish-eels-elvers-salmon-and-sea-trout>.

CUOP has carried out a number of projects investigating otter diet and we currently have a PhD working on the subject. Although the stomach of otters predominantly contains fish, they are



opportunistic predators and otter diet can be very variable. A whole frog was found in the stomach of an otter found near Pentrefelin (North Wales) – while amphibian remains are found in about 15% of otter guts it is unusual to find them virtually intact! An emaciated young male was found with a stomach stuffed full of bite sized chunks of bird, feathers and all, probably from a gull, prompting the question of whether otters take carrion - something that could make an interesting study in the future.

For regular updates, see our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/otterprojectuk/>.

### **GB Wildlife Disease Surveillance Partnership Quarterly Reports**

Please find below links to the quarterly reports of GB wildlife disease surveillance produced by the GB Wildlife Disease Surveillance Partnership:

- 2016 reports: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wildlife-disease-surveillance-reports-2016>
- 2015 reports: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wildlife-disease-surveillance-reports-2015>
- 2014 reports: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wildlife-disease-surveillance-reports-2014>
- Previous wildlife disease surveillance reports are available on the archived AHVLA web pages on the National Archive website:  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140707141401/http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/category/publications/disease-surv/surv-reports/>.

The **Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme (PBMS)** has published several reports in the last few months that report the residues of a range of chemical contaminants in predatory birds and otters, as well as a study investigating the potential use of population health indices that might be derived from the observations we record during the post mortem examination of the birds we receive. A further report measuring second generation anticoagulant rodenticides in barn owl livers will be published soon.



The reports can be downloaded by following the links below:

- [Anticoagulant rodenticides in red kites in Britain 2010 to 2015](#)
- [The potential for the use of population health indices in the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme](#)
- [Mercury concentrations in predatory bird livers and eggs as an indicator of changing environmental concentrations](#)
- [Liver concentrations of flame retardants in Eurasian otters collected from Scotland between 2013 and 2015.](#)

## News

The **British Wildlife Health Network** is a forum for communication amongst people with a particular interest in the health of, and diseases of relevance to, free-living wildlife. It is particularly for those working in Britain and/or those with a strong interest in British wildlife. Members may include, for example, veterinary surgeons, wildlife scientists and others working in related professions. The network is starting as an email discussion group (listserv), but we also envisage having a Facebook group in time. The network is being initiated and hosted by the BVZS, and the listserv will be moderated by Victoria Roberts and Katie Beckmann. If you'd like to join, please contact Victoria on [admin@bvzs.org](mailto:admin@bvzs.org) and see [WILDCOMS news](#).

## New publications

Ballingall et al., 2016 Limited diversity associated with duplicated class II MHC-DRB genes in the red squirrel population in the United Kingdom compared with continental Europe. *Conservation Genetics* DOI: 10.1007/s10592-016-0852-3

Dalziel et al., 2016. A Comparison of Disease Risk Analysis Tools for Conservation. *Ecohealth*. DOI: 10.1007/s10393-016-1161-5

Fountain et al., 2016. The Influence of Risk Factors Associated with Captive Rearing on Post-Release Survival in Translocated Cirl Buntings (*Emberiza cirlus*) in the UK. *Oryx*. DOI:10.1017/S0030605315001313

Hartley and Sainsbury, 2016. Approaches to Disease Risk Analysis in Wildlife Translocations for Conservation Purposes. *Ecohealth* DOI: 10.1007/s10393-016-1134-8

Jefferies et al., 2016. Reintroducing the cirl bunting to Cornwall. *British Birds* 109: 374-388.

Lu et al., 2017. Persistent Organic Pollutants in sediment and fish in the River Thames Catchment (UK). *Science of the Total Environment* 576: 78-84. DOI: 10.1016/j.scitotenv.2016.10.067

Rideout et al., 2016. Which Parasites Should We Be Most Concerned About in Wildlife Translocations? *Ecohealth* DOI: 10.1007/s10393-016-1132-x

Sainsbury et al., 2016. Disease risk analysis and post-release health surveillance for a reintroduction programme: the pool frog *Pelophylax lessonae*. *Transboundary and Emerging Diseases* doi:10.1111/tbed.12545.

Vaughan-Higgins et al., 2016. Biosecurity for translocations: cirl bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*), Fisher's estuarine moth (*Gortyna borellii lunata*), short-haired bumblebee (*Bombus subterraneus*) and pool frog (*Pelophylax lessonae*) translocations as case studies. *Ecohealth* DOI: 10.1007/s10393-016-1150-8.

## Contact us:

If you would like to see a particular topic in the WILDCOMS newsletter, contact us about other WILDCOMS related matters, or be added to our mailing list please e-mail the WILDCOMS coordinator Jacky Chaplow (<mailto:jgar@ceh.ac.uk>).

For detailed information about WILDCOMS and the schemes involved navigate to [www.wildcoms.org.uk](http://www.wildcoms.org.uk).